

STAT

**Page Denied**

STAT

INDICATIONS OF GOVERNMENT PURGE IN THE RUMANIAN PRESS

BEIPI (Bulletin de l'Association  
d'Etudes et d'Informations  
Politiques Internationales)  
Paris, 1 Nov 1953

The press of the Rumanian People's Republic has been devoting more and more space to letters from "volunteer correspondents," whose description of living conditions is quite different from that presented by official propaganda. In a letter published by Scanteia on 12 September 1953, one "volunteer correspondent" wrote: "For 2 years the People's Council of the city of Oradea (Transylvania) has kept the Baros Bridge closed to vehicles and pedestrians to permit work on strengthening the bridge. But the work has not yet started. Consequently, the inhabitants of the city are forced to travel great distances to their place of work."

Other letters point out that the bread distributed to the workers is inedible; that city ambulances are not available for transporting the sick to hospitals, but are used for personal trips by officials; that what some food stores represent to be a kilogram is only 800 grams, etc.

The persons responsible for the conditions under attack are invited by the newspapers to answer the accusations. Almost without exception, their explanations are considered inadequate and the press announces that they have been removed from their position. The purges accomplished by this method are intended, undoubtedly, to demonstrate that the government is receptive to criticism from below. But, aside from pointing up the faults of the Rumanian bureaucracy, the press also furnishes from time to time some interesting information on how this system of "volunteer correspondents" operates.

The 21 September 1953 issue of Scanteia announced that in order to put a stop to certain malpractices in a metallurgical plant, the denouncer, whose letter had been published by the same newspaper, had been appointed to replace the official who was "guilty of a lack of vigilance." This case is not unique. Most of the "volunteer correspondents" are members of the People's Committees or Councils which they attack. Thus it would appear that the system offers an opportunity for provincial militants to inform party leaders of the irregularities existing in the organizations to which they belong.

Actually, the criticism of "volunteer correspondents" (at least that which is published) nearly always prefaces a broader campaign. During the month of September 1953, the letters of denunciation carried in the daily press concerned largely the faulty system of food distribution and the poor quality of food products, as well as delays in the execution of production plans in the metallurgical industry. At the beginning of October 1953, these same subjects were taken up by the entire press. But this time, it was not the minor officials who were attacked, but the Ministry of Food Supply, the Ministry of Meat and Milk, and the Ministry of the Iron and Steel Industry. On 14 and 15 October 1953, Dumitru Diaconescu, Pascu Stefanescu, and Carol Loncear, heads of the above-mentioned ministries, were relieved from their positions.

To imagine that criticism arising from the lowest level could occasion the fall of ministers would be to misunderstand the methods employed by the Communist Party leaders in the People's Republics to get rid of their rivals. The three ousted ministers were technicians. None of them played an active political role. However, their successors, Petre Borila, head of the new Ministry of Agriculture (created by the merger of the Ministry of Food Supply and the Ministry of Meat and Milk), and Chivu Stoica, who replaced Carol Loncear at the head of the Ministry of the Iron and Steel Industry, are influential members of the party. They are both former leaders of Rumanian labor unions, in which Premier

STAT

Gheorghiu-Dej installed his friends in 1944. The ex-president of the central labor union bureau George Apostol, and Chivu Stoica (railroad workers who participated, along with Gheorghiu-Dej, in a strike in 1930) became vice-presidents of the Council of Ministers in the shuffle which preceded the latest ministerial shake-up. Thus, they became members of the small, leading council which has existed in the People's Republics since "collective leadership" became the fashion in the Soviet Union.

The composition of this former council took into account the different elements in the Rumanian Politburo. Gheorghiu-Dej and his union friends belonged to the majority. The cosmopolitan faction was represented by its leader, Iosif Chisinevski. The technicians, supported by Gen Emil Bodnarus, Minister of National Defense (who enjoys the favor of Moscow, where he was initiated into Marxist-Leninist science), were represented by Alexandru Vidrascu. At the beginning of September 1953, the latter was relieved from his position. His dismissal was followed by letters of denunciation written by "volunteer correspondents," a campaign which was to lead to the discharge of the three technicians who headed the food and metallurgical ministries.

It is probable that these shufflings in the Rumanian government were only the beginning of a purge destined to assure Gheorghiu-Dej exclusive control of the Rumanian Communist Party. This theory is confirmed by the latest letters from "volunteer correspondents" published in the press. In addition to the case involving the misuse of ambulances, mentioned above, more irregularities have been cited during the past few weeks. On 7 October 1953, Scanteia published a letter denouncing the shortage of medicines in the hospitals, as follows: sick persons urgently in need of antibiotics are reportedly treated with distilled water because the doctors, lacking the proper remedies, are resigned to combating infectious diseases by suggestion. In this connection, social security and public health are under the jurisdiction of Mme Liuba Chisinevski, the wife of one of the four vice-presidents of the Council of Ministers. (The council actually has only three vice-presidents since the ouster of Vidrascu.)

Moreover, the press has already begun to criticize the policy followed regarding ethnic minorities, affirming that citizens of Hungarian and German origin do not have the same benefits as do the majority. The "cultural level" of these minorities, and education in general, are under the jurisdiction of Iosif Chisinevski. Considering the case of Vidrascu and that of the three ousted ministers, it would appear that the dismissal of Iosif and Liuba Chisinevski is imminent.

- E N D -

STAT